

# Holy Mackerel

Because food's worth it!



[Home](#) [About](#) [Contact](#) [Cooking for Life project](#)

Posted on December 30, 2013 by Aoife

## Remembering David Tiernan



Some precious slices of Glebe Brethan

precious jars made from this year's crop. But the cheese is particularly precious. Though still available in the likes of Sheridan's, it won't be for long. Its producer, the late, great cheesemaker David Tiernan, tragically passed away all too early this year.

I wrote an appreciation of David's life and work in *Food&Wine Magazine* after his death, and struck up a correspondance with his brother during the year. Last week we met for a coffee and Seamus gave me a gift of a generous piece of David's gorgeous cheese. I've been eating my way through it over the Christmas break, and toasting David's memory each time I pour a drop of fine wine to match it. It went particularly well with an Arun sourdough sandwich featuring another winner of the Irish Food Writers' Guild Food Awards, Coopershill House smoked venison.

It is sad that David's beloved herd of cows which he built up over the years should now be sold and living in other fields. They must miss him. But it's heartening to think that they will have many more mornings like the one captured by Ella McSweeney when she filmed David releasing them back into the fields after a winter sheltering in sheds.

Below is what I wrote about Glebe Brethan 11 months before David's untimely death for a St

I've been working late tonight, filling my wine column copy before I head away for a break in the new year, listening to the meditative sounds of Blue of the Night on Lyric, sipping a drop of Priorat wine and snacking on Glebe Brethan cheese with my boyfriend's sister's home-made green tomato chutney.

The chutney tastes even better with the knowledge that it is one of just a few



@Holymackers

Delighted that one of this year's @foodguild award winners, Ballyhoura Mushrooms @Irishshiitake, got a @EurotoquesIrl award #foodheroes #Congrats @edhick for well deserved @EurotoquesIrl award yday, great news #foodheroes @foodguild #@LunchtimeMarket done! #@LunchtimeMarket @MerrionSqDub great news, I won't make this Thu, will be judging cheese at @bloominthepark but will try to pop over next wk #

B/cos even getting a cab home at night doesn't feel like a fully safe option, and I first held my keys like a weapon at 12 yrs #YesAllWomen #

RT @LorenRaedean: "@theshawdawg96: All men and women should read this. Best thing I've ever read #YesAllWomen <http://t.co/d8i01XaXis>" wow. #

A good catchup incase you needed it: "@NewYorker: The Power

Patrick's Day focus on winners of the Irish Food Writers' Guild Food Awards 2012. [You can read the full post of March 2012 here with details of other award-winners.]

It is followed by an edited version of what I wrote for *Food&Wine Magazine* after his death.



**Glebe Brethan Cheese:** If you love Comte from France's Jura (I do) you'll love this gruyere-style cheese produced by Co Louth dairy farmer David Tiernan. I had the pleasure of David's company over the awards lunch, and a nicer dairy farmer I have not met. He told me he was surprised by the passion he has discovered for cheese-making since he began it in the mid-noughties. He spoke in his quiet, understated way about the magic of walking his cows up a lane at 5am, knowing that they're about to give him the milk to produce 45kg wheels of thermophilic cheese which will be taking shape in round moulds by noon. And his lovely wife Margaret told me of how she liked to grate Glebe Brethan onto fried potato rosti, or serve it cubed in fresh salads. All of which made me love Glebe Brethan cheese even more than I already did. The cheese itself is creamy and complex, fruity when young and getting nutty when older. How old you get it is a matter of luck, as David tends to sell it according to demand. But he does say that every year he gets a little bit better at making this cheese from the raw milk of his Montbelliarde cows (a special breed native to the Jura) and that each year it can mature that little bit longer. Better you say David? I like the sound of that.

of #YesAllWomen  
<http://t.co/itPG7a6EmD>  
#  
RT @BurkieYCP: I can run at night. I can explore cities in any country. I can get drunk and take a cab. I dress however I want. #YesAllWomen can't. #

It's probably here:

Recently:

Remembering David Tiernan  
Lovely leftovers, currytastic style  
One never-to-be-repeated tasting 1639  
Shopping like it used to be!

Pages

About  
Contact  
Cooking for Life project



Glebe Brethan cheese, one of the greats of Irish farmhouse cheeses

**In memory of David Tiernan, as published in *Food&Wine Magazine***

On Monday 25th February 2013, on what should have been the 55th birthday of the late and much lamented David Tiernan, many of Ireland's broad family of food producers, promoters, writers, chefs and farmers travelled across the country to Dunleer, Co Louth. They came to pay their last respects to a man who described himself, with well-placed pride and in a very particular order, as "dairy farmer, cheesemaker and seller of raw milk".

That evening, an extraordinary toast was made at a gathering of many of Ireland's finest chefs. It was the AGM of Euro-toques Ireland, an organisation founded in 1986 by Myrtle Allen of Ballymaloe House – once described by David as his "greatest inspiration" – and committed to seeking out the very best of Irish food and supporting the very best of Irish farmers and food producers.

Into gleaming champagne glasses David's precious raw milk was poured. Precious not just because since 2010, David Tiernan has been one of a handful of Irish raw milk producers to brave the Irish authorities' resistance to the sale of unpasteurised, unhomogenised milk. (Indeed, thanks to the quiet determination of David and friends Ella McSweeney, Kevin Sheridan and Elisabeth Ryan of the Campaign for Raw Milk Ireland, the sale of raw milk looks set to become carefully regulated rather than banned.)

Nor precious simply because David's unique milk made him one of the few producers to have been honoured twice by Euro-toques in their annual food awards. (He received his first in 2006 for his exemplary gruyère-style Glebe Brethan cheese and another in 2011 for his raw liquid milk.)

What made that golden-hued, creamy-textured liquid in the champagne flutes most precious was the man who had produced it, a man described by his brother Seamus Tiernan in that morning's eloquent funeral eulogy as "an ordinary man who in so many ways was extraordinary".

Eloquence runs in the Tiernan family. On Glebe Brethan's website, David's cows are lovingly described. "The Montbeliarde is beautiful in shades of dark chestnut with distinctive cream

patches. She has a steady gait and inquisitive nature searching the hedgerows for the sweetest grasses and herbs.” She also produces extra creamy milk which is higher in protein and fat, a factor which lead David to found the Montbeliarde Cattle Society of Ireland in 1997.

David said that the proudest day of his life was the day his wife Margaret brought twin sons James and Leo into this world. He also took a familial pride in his closed herd, built up on his fourth-generation farm from two cows imported back in the mid-1990s. As cheesemonger and close ally Kevin Sheridan observes, “He was so proud of that land and his cows, and so he was proud of the milk they produced. He was never surprised when someone would say how good it was or how it was the best milk they ever tasted; he would just nod.”

They suited eachother, David and the herd described on his website as “solid and stoic in appearance, serene and placid in nature and never in a hurry”. He might have been describing himself, and his steady, unhurried journey to becoming one of Ireland’s most highly regarded artisan food producers. No matter that David came to cheesemaking less than ten years ago – to the likes of Kevin Sheridan “it always felt like he was one of the originals, representing everything that Irish farmhouse cheese aspires to”.

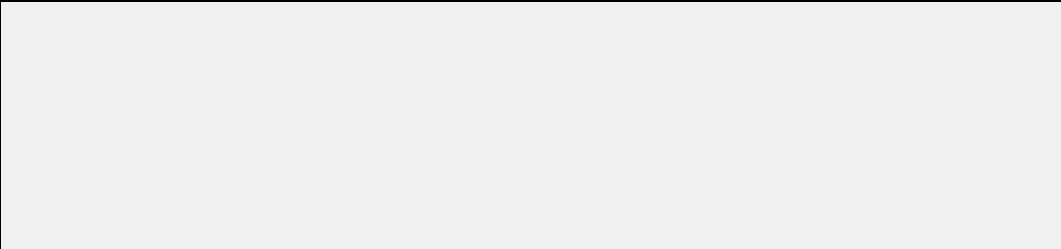
But David remained a dairy farmer, first and foremost. The cheese and the direct sales of milk were vehicles: an albeit meticulously crafted means to the treasured end of continuing his farming legacy. “While everyone agrees that his cheese is absolutely outstanding, what was really unique about David,” suggests Ruth Hegarty, Secretary of Euro-toques Ireland, “was that he recognised that what he was doing – and what had been done by his family for three generations before him – was really special.

“He recognised that their milk deserved to finish up somewhere better than in one huge vat in a creamery to be pasteurised and homogenised and packed on supermarket shelves, with little return for the farmer who had done everything to the highest standards and produced something of great value.”

As Secretary of the Irish Food Writer’s Guild, I had the personal pleasure of David and Margaret’s company during the Guild’s 2011 Irish Food Awards lunch. They were there to collect yet another award for his wonderful Glebe Brethan cheese. He told me he was surprised by the passion he had discovered for cheesemaking and that his cheese was getting better every year. He spoke in his quiet, understated way about the magic of walking his cows up a lane at 5am, knowing that they were about to give him the precious milk to produce what Kevin Sheridan describes as “those huge wheels of cheese, each one special, packed with the complexity of his land, his cows and himself”.

David Tiernan was a dairy farmer by birth, and at heart. But through his too-short life he developed the accumulated skill and craft of an artisan, displayed the singular soul of a poet, and won friends and admirers countrywide with what was the charm of an Irish country gentleman in the truest sense of those words. Kevin speaks for so many when he says, “We will miss his beautiful cheese, but we will miss David, our friend, so much more.”

David once said he would “walk to Cork for Myrtle Allen”. It may have surprised him to have known how many of the Irish food community would and did cross the country to pay their lasting respects to him. He was, for so many, one of the greatest inspirations: a true legend from that land of legends, Co Louth, and one of the most extraordinary of ordinary men.







RIP David.



Filed in Artisan food producers | 0 Comments

Posted on December 19, 2013 by Aoife

**Lovely leftovers, curryptastic style**



Preserved limes, hot red chillies and Stonewell's low alcohol Tobairin craft cider

I've always had a certain love for leftovers. Cold pizza is a favourite, for breakfast preferably, when the texture of the previously melted and now regrouped cheese offers a very particular if slightly peculiar comfort.

This weekend I discovered another surprisingly moreish leftover breakfast dish, when we wrapped some juicy, just-cooked Superquinn sausages into reheated roti bread, cushioned them into place with some cold dahl and moistened the lot with raita. Not bloody bad! Of course, the hangover was probably a crucial ingredient, perhaps even more so than with cold pizza (which I would eat almost any morning).

But on Monday night I did even better work on the leftovers from Saturday's curryptastic dinner party. As well as little tasters of lamb rogan josh and pork vindaloo (the latter from [this Madhur Jaffrey recipe](#), and highly recommended) I had a generous portion left of my take on Rick Stein's Madras fish curry. The original recipe can be found [here](#), but below is my version. I can't say whether it's better than Ricks or not, as this is the version I ended up making, mostly by default. But I can tell you that it was really tasty, and even more so on the Monday, partly due to flavours marrying and partly due to some extra additions.

Aside from replacing unavailable ingredients (I used local red gurnard instead of imported red snapper and replaced two teaspoons of Kashmiri chilli powder with one each of cayenne pepper and paprika), I also skipped a crucial instruction by mistake and ended up having to improvise a little. Having gotten distracted and tipped the tomatoes into the softened onions too early (pre-spices), I fried the curry leaves and spices and added them to the tomatoes once they had released their aromas. It added such a nice smokiness that tonight I repeated it tonight, adding more fried spices into the reheated leftovers, this time including some garam marsala, black mustard seeds, whole coriander seeds, more curry leaves and a few lightly bashed small red chillies to crank up the heat.

I also added a couple of dried limes before reheating. I've never used them before but my fella bought them in his favourite ethnic shop on Thomas Street, and I think they may be about to become my new culinary obsession, being amazingly tangy and intense.

I washed the lot down with my new favourite low-alcohol drink: Stonewell's Tobairín Cider, which is just 1.5% ABV but full of tangy Stonewell character thanks to fermented Elstar eating apples blended with fresh Jonagored juicy. It's properly tasty and highly recommended as perfect pairing for a Monday night curry leftover – all the flavour with none of the guilt!

So here's the final recipe, a mix of what Rick does and what I did and what I would do next time. Enjoy!

**A sour fish curry of gurnard, tamarind and preserved limes (après Rick Stein)**

2–3 tablespoons vegetable oil

1 tablespoon yellow mustard seeds

1/2 tablespoon black mustard seeds

1/2 tablespoon whole coriander seeds

1 large onion, finely chopped

3 garlic cloves, finely crushed

400g/14oz can chopped tomatoes

2–3 preserved limes, halved

100ml/3½fl oz tamarind liquid

40 fresh curry leaves

2 teaspoons ground coriander

2 teaspoons ground turmeric

1 teaspoon cayenne pepper

1 teaspoon paprika

1 teaspoon garam marsala

2 green chillies, each sliced lengthways into 6 pieces, with seeds

1 teaspoon salt

700g/1lb 9oz snapper fillets, cut into biggish chunks

boiled basmati rice, to serve

Serves 4–6

In a heavy-based saucepan, heat a tablespoon or two of oil over a medium heat and add the mustard seeds to the hot oil. Fry for 30 seconds or until they begin to release their aromas. Stir in the onion and garlic and fry gently for 10 minutes, or until softened and lightly golden-brown. Add the tomatoes, preserved limes and tamarind liquid, and allow to simmer.

In a separate pan, heat another tablespoon of oil and once hot, add the curry leaves, cayenne powder, paprika, coriander and turmeric and stir-fry for a minute or two until they release their aromas but before the curry leaves burn. Add to the tomatoes along with green chillies and salt and simmer for another five or six minutes, or until rich and reduced. At this point, you could allow to cool and set aside until ready to serve.

Once ready to serve, heat the tangy tomato base through. Add the fish, cook for a further five minutes or until just cooked through, and serve with plain rice.



Filed in Leftovers, Recipes | 0 Comments

Posted on December 17, 2013 by Aoife

One never-to-be-repeated tasting

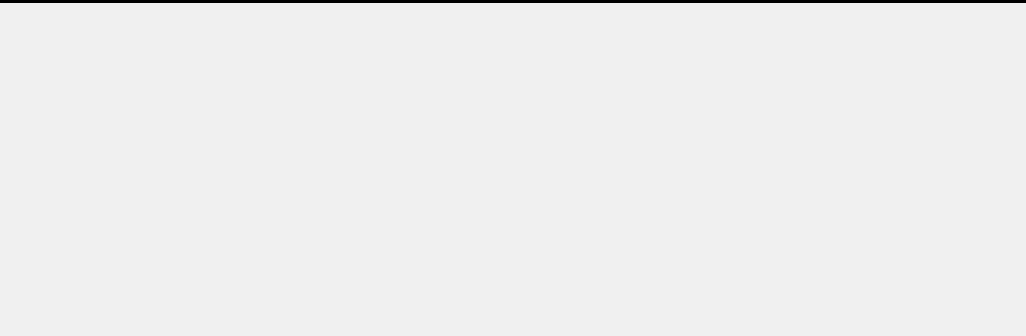
Wow.

I just tasted a range of ‘de-alcoholised’ wines, ie drinks that are made like wines and then have the alcohol removed before being sold in wine bottles to be drunk in place of actual wine.

Tasting notes for the whites range from ‘furry peaches and cream with hint of dead mouse’ (a Californian Chardonnay) to ‘gone-off buttermilk’ (a ‘Premium’ German beauty). The rosé was like ‘milk teeth on steroids’ (White Zinfandel) and the red a straight-up ‘gross’ (Californian Merlot).

Thankfully I had some left-over cold plain pasta on hand. And mouthwash. And actual wine. I can still kind of taste them but I’m happy knowing I will NEVER HAVE TO DO THAT AGAIN!

Apparently people buy this stuff and not just to serve it to people they have a pathological resentment against or something.







Remember Schloer? I do. And would much rather drink it than furry peaches and dead mouse cream. Weird that.

Once I got over the involuntary gagging reflexes, the one upside of tasting the above offenders was that they made the Torres Natureo Muscat ('tangy Schloer with rose petals and peach') and Torres Natureo Syrah ('fruity and almost wine-like!') taste amazingly well made in comparison. At least they kinda retained some of their original varietal flavours. And I didn't have to leg it straight to the sink once I tasted them, just in case.

I'm not saying I'd drink these two Spaniards myself, cos personally I think life's too short and wine is too tasty and I don't mind drinking proper apple juice if I have to drive or something (or preferably my new favourite low-alcohol choice, Stonewell's Tobairin, which is just 1.5% ABV and full of zingy craft cider attitude and goes great with curries, of which more anon).

But if you were on antibiotics maybe and really missing having the odd glass of wine with dinner, or if you were in early pregnancy and hoping no-one at the dinner party would notice the small print promising 'less than 0.5% ABV', or if you were obsessed with getting bikini-skinny and seduced by the promise of 'fewer than half the calories of normal wine', then I could see how you might actually not mind drinking those two 'once-was-a-wine' beverages.

So now you know.

Ah the charmed life of a wine writer. Tasting all the muck so you don't have to.

You're welcome.



Tobairin from Stonewell: all the cider tang with little of the alcohol zing and no threat of gagging reflexes



Filed in Craft beers, Wine | 0 Comments

Posted on December 12, 2013 by Aoife

Have you checked out Ranelagh's new 'Bar & Kitchen', formerly Russell's and now reinvented as Taphouse? I have, and my review of it will run next Friday in the Indo's Day & Night Magazine. (Tomorrow's review features Forest Avenue, the new restaurant off Leeson Street which I bet you're set to hear lots about if you haven't already.)

But in the meantime, there's a little gathering tonight in Ranelagh's Taphouse which might be of interest if you're in the hood, and if you like the sound of free beer and cheese?



Brewer's Gold, a washed rind organic cow's milk cheese

The people from Knockdrinna Farmhouse Cheese in Kilkenny have put their heads together with the Little Milk Company and some of Ireland's best craft brewers, and come up with a new cheese called 'Brewer's Gold'. It's made by Helen Finnegan, Knockdrinna's award-winning cheese-maker, with organic cow's milk cheese from the various organic farmers who supply to the Little Milk Company, and its rind is washed in various Irish craft beers and ales including O'Hara's Pale Ale, Dungarvan Brewing's Red Ale, and Eight Degrees' Red Ale.

If you fancy trying some of the cheese alongside some winter craft brews, there's a launch party tonight (December 12th) in the Taphouse from 6.30pm. All are welcome, so maybe see you there?

And yes, I am reliably informed that there will be free beer!



Filed in Artisan food producers, Listings of Events | 0 Comments

Posted on December 10, 2013 by Aoife

**Shopping like it used to be!**

Remember when – back in the days that airlines used to give you free booze – you could look forward to a good old-fashioned feed during your supermarket shop? Fridays were the best day for it, when you were almost guaranteed an aul cocktail sausage or two not to mention a cube of cheddar cheese. Never mind that you were seven years old and not yet in charge of the household purse strings. If you were really lucky you might get a taste of one of those hallucinogenically salty Findus pancakes that your ma wouldn't dream of letting into her hallowed trolley.

If you're feeling nostalgic for the good old days, pop into Donnybrook Fair this coming Friday (13th – shh) for a good old-fashioned free feed. I have to warn you, there won't be any Findus pancakes. But there will be complimentary mince pies, smoked salmon, chocolates, cheeses and mulled wines to be enjoyed across stores on Baggot Street and Morehampton Road and in Stillorgan and Greystones.

They've even released their schedule so you know when to get your skulk on:

- *Donnybrook Fair, Baggot Street, 11am–3pm, Friday 13th*
- *Donnybrook Fair, Morehampton Road, 11am–4pm, Saturday 14th*
- *Donnybrook Fair, Stillorgan, 11am–4pm, Saturday 14th*
- *Donnybrook Fair, Greystones, 11am–4pm, Saturday 14th*



And a happy minced pie to you too!



Filed in Artisan food producers, Dublin, Listings of Events | 0 Comments

Posted on December 3, 2013 by Aoife

**Do you believe in the power of wonky SPUDS?**

Here's a question that just popped up in my inbox: Can a wonky potato, some markers and a packet of crisps change the course of Irish Agriculture? It was asked by a woman who will be familiar to many people interested in the future of Irish food, the inimitable Kaethe Burt-O'Dea.

The implicit question being posed by Kaethe was also, do you fancy a healthy and unique day out this coming weekend, where your physical work out is rewarded by a bag of spuds for the Christmas table AND a good story to tell while you're eating them, one that involves you helping to save the future of Irish agriculture?

Kaethe is one of founders and drivers of SPUDS, which was launched in 2012 "as a proactive response to the decision to trial genetically-modified (GM) blight-resistant potatoes in Ireland".



SPUDS believes in "the power of the individual to effect change" and that "the most important subjects of the future will be water quality, soil fertility and nutrition." Their aim is "to prove that Ireland will generate higher levels of innovation and employment by concentrating our research energy on the development of a food system that promotes lean production, enhanced nutrition and environmental health."

That all sounds quite serious but they've been approaching their mission with a great sense of fun and imagination, as these rather brilliant demonstrations of the potential appeal of the wonkiest of potatoes proves:



**SPUDS.ie**

[www.facebook.com/SPUDS.research](http://www.facebook.com/SPUDS.research)

Some of the results of their SPUDS Character Workshop, where SPUDS.ie asked people to get up close and personal with the kind of wonky-shaped spuds which are typically rejected: you can see more on [Flickr.com/groups/spudscharacters2012](http://Flickr.com/groups/spudscharacters2012)

Having gotten people's attention, SPUDS.ie went on to produce some award-winning 'Crisps with a Conscience', the sale of which aimed to bring people's attention to the kinds of perfectly good potatoes which never reach their potential as a delicious crisp because somebody somewhere decides that us consumers won't want to eat them. There is a second limited edition of these story-telling crisps in the planning, and that's where you potentially come in.

On December 8th, potato farmer John Swaby-Miller will be digging, picking, washing and preparing an acre of naturally blight-resistant Sarpo Axona potatoes, which will be sold in 5kg bags for Christmas to raise funds this next round of SPUDS.ie. And he and Kaethe need volunteers to help.

The deal? Don some warm clothes and rain proofs and a pair of gardening gloves, and join them in Co. Wicklow for an invigorating day in the field with John and his piglets. Good company and a hardy potato lunch will be provided in a local pub. The designated meeting place is the parking lot of the Tap Pub, Kilbride, Co Wicklow, 45 minutes from Dublin on the N11: [click here for the map](#).

The reward? "A warm feeling in your soul and your very own bag of the best SPUDS in Ireland for your Christmas Feast!"

If you're interested, just drop Kaethe a line at [research\[AT\]spuds.ie](mailto:research@spuds.ie) or give her a call on 087 2444185 by Wednesday December 4th so that they can put your name in the pot. And if you can't make it, you could pop along to Dublin's Block T POP UP Christmas Market in Smithfield where they will be selling their Christmas SPUDS from December 13th.

Keep an eye on [Facebook](#) for their event updates or see [SPUDS.ie](#) and their flyer below for more information.



Filed in [Eating Irish](#), [GMOs](#), [Issues](#), [Listings of Events](#) | 0 Comments

Posted on November 29, 2013 by Aoife  
**Aoife's Fantasy Festive Food & Wine Wishlist**

It's that time of year when everyone's writing lists and checking them twice. My hairdresser has all her presents bought (well, 42 of them) *and* wrapped. I know: it's not even December yet, for jeebus-jumpers sake! So, I've made a list too. My very own wishlist of what I would love to receive from family, friends or enemies looking to lure me into a false sense of security. I'll admit that some of them are more realistic than others, but a girl can but dream.

So, in no particular order, here follows my Fantasy Festive Food & Wine Wishlist (as it appeared in IMAGEdaily today, only with links, and some pix in case my words don't cut it for you):

1. **A very generous voucher for Ireland's Blue Book**, which just celebrated its 40th anniversary with the addition of Thornton's Restaurant (where the canapé bar is one of Dublin's most underrated food-fun nights out); the remote Clare Island Lighthouse (a spectacularly located guesthouse overlooking Clew Bay); and Liss Ard Estate in Skibbereen (which has the coolest magical-mystery gardens, complete with an otherworldly Irish Sky Garden where humdrum clouds are elevated to works of art). Now when I say 'a very generous Blue Book voucher' I would of course graciously accept any kind of a Blue Book voucher. Especially if it came with the latest glovebox-friendly copy of *Georgina Campbell's Ireland Guide* or the *McKenna's Irish Food Guide*, so I could be sure to eat well en route too.



Some view, huh? That there's Clew Bay.

2. **A full set of Riedel's 'varietal specific' wine glasses** so that I could have the perfect glass for every wine I drink, whatever the grapes or style. (I attended a Riedel tasting recently and their glasses really do make an incredible difference to different wines.) The only problem is that, with separate glasses for Cabernet or Pinot Noir, Riesling or Chardonnay, and so on, I'd really need a bigger kitchen to keep them all in. And logistically, that would involve moving out of my tiny apartment, which I'm really rather fond of. So to avoid all that hoo-ha, I'd settle for the Syrah set, the most versatile of the lot.

3. **A year's supply of one of the following:**

- a) **Pata Negra Iberico ham**, to be delivered to my door by a swarthy Spaniard. (Failing that, a voucher for Black Pig in Donnybrook might do it, and I could go collect my own whenever supplies run low, and pick up a bottle of something delicious while I'm at it.)
- b) **M&L Szechuan's chilli-fried green beans**. (Or failing that, a new stainless-steel wok from the Asian market, a supply of dried bird's eye chillies and the recipe for said green beans.)
- c) **Green papaya salad**, like what used to be on the menu at Diep Le Shaker restaurant and what I could have lived on in northern Thailand. (Or failing that, a mandolin slicer and a voucher for the Asian Market so I could get a fresh supply of unripe papaya, chillies, *nam pla* fish sauce and limes to make my own.)

4. Speaking of mandolins, I'd also love **a new Microplane grater**, which happens to be the best grater in the world. I left mine at a party (don't ask) and I really miss it for everything from grating Parmesan to finely grating garlic (beats crushing it by a mile). Okay, if you have to know, it was my own party but in a rented place and we were cooking and I thought I couldn't cook without my Microplane. That's how much I love it.



That's what I mean by Microplane

5. **A case of Highbank Medieval Cider**, because I know that it'll probably be sold out by Christmas if it isn't already. If you haven't tried it, look out for it next year: it's an amazing new honeyed cider that is sweet at first and then dry thanks to the tannic apples. Or failing that a mixed case of Irish craft beers and ciders. (A year's supply is harder to define, right?)

6. **A wine course**. If I hadn't already done the WSET course run by Cooks Academy ('Dublin's School of Food & Wine') and tutored by the brilliant Liam Campbell, I'd do that all over again. It was such a treat to go in every week, taste different wines and learn about different styles from all over the world. (WSET stands for Wine & Spirits Education Trust, a global professional wine educator, but they offer courses at all levels from introductory to Masters of Wine.) But seeing as how I've done the WSET thing, I'd go for a voucher for Ely Wine Bar's weekly Thursday night wine tastings, which are only €15 a pop and give you a chance to taste some gorgeous wines you mightn't otherwise try.

7. **A pair of stockings from Avoca** (have you seen them? Cute or what!) **stuffed full of hot and salted Pulparindo candy bars** and fizzy cola bottles and Wham bars. (There's a reason that tangy green papaya salad is my favourite dish ever.) What are Pulparindo bars? They are the penny sweets of gods, courtesy of some Mexican genius who thought to turn tangy tamarind into a sweet candy, and to flavour it with salt and chilli. Bam!





chilli-hot, salted and tangy tamarind – that's what I'm talking about, right there

8. **A stainless steel stove-top moka pot for home-brewed coffee**, possibly from Coffee Angel on South Anne Street, who seem to sell every kind of coffee accessory you could possibly want, not to mention every kind of coffee. (My current favourite is their Kebel Demersa from Ethiopia which tastes like Turkish delight, in a good way.) Oh and they're also selling really sweet little stocking filler snowflakes made out of Finnish birch for €6, 100% of which goes to Barnardos. Sweet.

9. **A voucher for Inis Meain Restaurant & Suites** so I could go back and recreate one of the best short breaks I've ever had. And maybe I could go towards the end of their season and they'd let me stay on and write that novel I always thought I'd get around to. It'd be the perfect stop for it, and the food is pretty darn spot on too. (I could do island lobster and fresh spuds on a daily basis. No problem!)



The Inis Meain Breakfast Box, delivered to your door early morning to be eaten whenever. That's my kind of breakfast.

10. **An essential cookbook.** Maybe Darina Allen's *30 Years of Ballymaloe*, which just won Best Irish Cookbook at the Bord Gais Energy Book of the Year awards. Or *From Lynda's Table* by Lynda Booth of Dublin Cookery School, where I did the life-affirming one-month cookery course a few years back. Or Ross Lewis's startling *Chapter One: An Irish Food Story*. Or whatever cookbook looked fun and interesting and solidly written. I wouldn't mind which one.

Whichever.

I'm really very easy to please.

Honest.



The Chapter One cookbook, a soulful thing with very beautiful photography by Barry McCall



Filed in Artisan food producers, Cookbooks, Craft beers, Dublin Cookery School, Irish cooking, Restaurants, Wine | 0 Comments

Posted on November 18, 2013 by Aoife

## Tuscan tasting

If you're in the market for a mid-week treat, and if a top-notch five-course dinner with gorgeous matching wines

presented by an internationally renowned wine-maker sounds like your bag, then you are indeed in for a treat this week.

On Wednesday evening in Ely CHQ (that's the one in the IFSC, Dublin 1), The Corkscrew wine merchants are hosting a very special wine dinner with visiting wine-maker Paolo de Marchi from **Isole e Olena** winery, one of Chianti Classico's leading lights. A fourth-generation wine-maker and exceptionally charming man, Paolo was one of several wine-makers who helped to put Tuscany back on the map in the 1970s and '80s by producing wine according to their own rules rather than according to the rules laid down by the local Chianti appellation regulations.



The wine at the picture-pretty estate of Isole e Olena

Following the lead of the makers of ground-breaking Super-Tuscan wines such as Sassicaia and Tignanello (both of which made the bold step of introducing Bordeaux grapes to their blends), Paolo made an international name for himself and his Tuscan estate. But unlike those two genre-defining wines, which looked beyond Tuscany for inspiration, Paolo's



most esteemed wine, Cepparello, is a celebration of the local Sangiovese grape (100%) as well as the soil and climate of the local terroir. He doesn't restrict himself to local grapes however, with Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay coming centre-stage in other Isole e Olena wines.



Paola di Marche and his son Luca who now works with him at the Tuscan estate in the heart of Chianti Classico

On Wednesday evening, you'll have to eat and drink your way through five courses to get to the climactic tasting of the Cepparello, which will be paired with Italian and Irish cheeses. But that won't be any great hardship, with pairings such as baked bone marrow, herb crust and salsa verde served with with Isole e Olena's award-winning Chianti Classico 2010; or haunch of venison with braised chicory, celeriac remoulade and chocolate, served with their Collezione de Marchi Syrah 2006.

The dinner kicks off at 8pm and costs €95 per head, which is more than your average mid-week meal for sure. But considering that, in a wine shop, you would pay on average about half of that for a bottle of any one of the six wines being served, it's a pretty good deal. [Click here to go The](#)



Corkscrew's website and grab one of the last few tickets going.

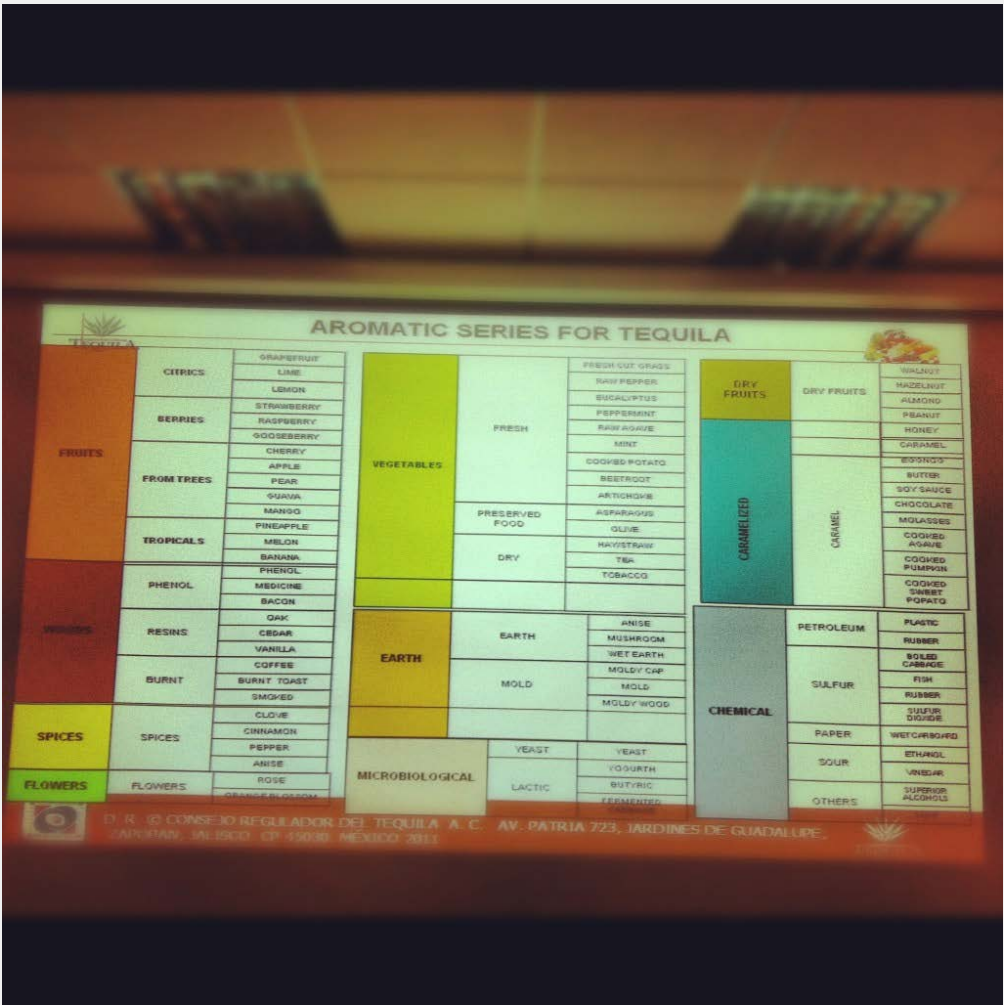


Filed in Listings of Events, Restaurants, Uncategorized, Wine | 0 Comments

Posted on November 14, 2013 by Aoife  
**A Taste of Mexico**

This week Dublin is getting a Taste of Mexico, thanks to the return of the annual ‘food and culture festival’. I’m reliably informed that tequila and mezcal are counted as the latter (culture) and I imagine that they have in their time been considered by some as the former (they’re certainly delicious enough) but either way, both feature big in this week’s celebrations.

Last night I attended a free tequila talk & tasting in the Cervantes Institute in Lincoln House, Lincoln Place, off Nassau Street. (The same spot plays host at 7pm tonight to a free mezcal tasting – see more details below for this and other mescal events at the weekend.) We tasted three styles of tequila: fruity and punchy blanco, spiced but soft reposado, and caramel-mellow anejo. Both reposado and anejo tequila have been aged in white oak barrels, for at least two months or one year respectively. We sipped them and scanned the overhead screen to ascertain which of tequila’s many potential aromas and flavours we were getting. It was great fun, and pretty darn delicious too!



Betcha you didn't get all those subtleties from your last shot of tequila, eh?

Before the tequila talk, a visiting Mexican chef talked us through Mexico's vast and varied dishes. Helma Honda waxed lyrical about such delights as ant's eggs and grasshoppers and other Mexican delicacies (some of which are promised at tonight's mezcal tasting). Then when she had our attention with those curiosities, she explained that in a country that is nine times the size of the UK, containing 30 separate states, each with at least 100 of their own signature local dishes, it is hard to say what might be a 'typical Mexican dish'. Certainly what is typical are many of the base ingredients which they introduced to the rest of the world, including chocolate, vanilla, tomatoes, chillies and corn. And typically most Mexican cooking takes a sophisticated approach to chillies, mixing three or more types in one dish for subtlety of flavour. It's not all about subtlety however, as our taster of this tangtastic 'hot and salted tamarind pulp candy' proved. Wow! I can still taste it today!



chilli-hot, salted and tangy tamarind – where were you all my life?

All of this talk made us hungry for more authentic Mexican flavours so we hightailed it to 777 on Sth Great George's St where bartender extraordinaire Leo Molloy whipped us up a sneak preview of two stars from their new margarita menu, one featuring grapefruit and thyme and the other (my favourite) a take on the classic pairing of jalapenos and coriander. Savage, the pair of them.



Sorry for the grainy shot, but it's pretty dark and moody in 777, innit?

Leo also told us that 777 were neck and neck with their top competitors in the race to claim title of Best Taco in Dublin. (You can still vote [here](#) before the final cook-off takes place tomorrow at the Mansion House.)

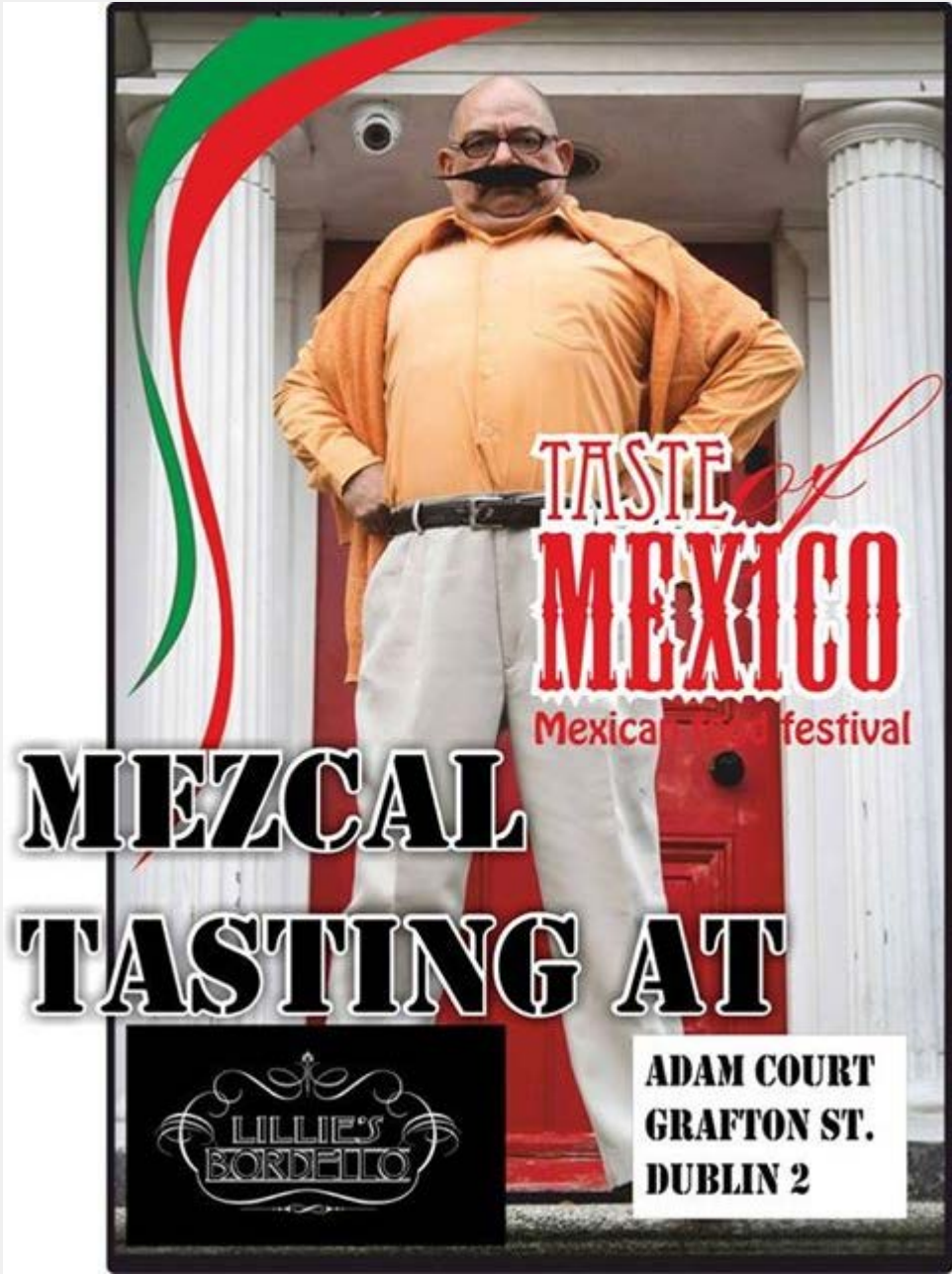
AND it turns out that Sergio Inurrigarro of the Association for Mezcal Culture will be hosting another mezcal tasting in 777 on Saturday lunchtime at 2pm (€20 including lunch), so if you miss him tonight you have a second chance to catch him. Actually, it's a third chance, because later tonight he's hosting another free tasting in Lillie's Bordello at 10pm (email [guestlist@lilliesbordello.ie](mailto:guestlist@lilliesbordello.ie) to book a place).

Wherever you catch him, do try to. The guy is quite the character, and the last time I tasted mezcal with him (two years ago, at a Slow Food 'Mezcal and Irish farmhouse cheese pairing' event) he came armed with some really interesting bottles, so be prepared to fall in love with this very traditional Mexican drink.

Because mezcal can be made from any type of agave plant (vs tequila, for which only the Tequila Weber blue agave plant can be used) and because it is for the most part a small-scale artisinal affair (vs the vast commercial scale of many tequila brands), different mezcals really do taste quite different, from smoky to very pure and lots inbetween. According to Sergio, it is a "mystic, magic aphrodisiac and an extraordinary drink", one that "when drunk with measure... wakes the spirit, tames enmity, stimulates imagination, clears resentments and accompanies solitude."

You heard it here.





Sergio himself. He's waiting for you, armed with mezcal.



Filed in Listings of Events, Restaurants, Uncategorized | 0 Comments

Posted on November 12, 2013 by Aoife  
**Guerilla Gourmet Club seasonal treats**

I recently got my hands on some amazing autumnal mushrooms, a mix of shiitake and cep and golden oyster and lion's mane and lord knows what, the kind of mix of shapes, sizes and flavours that makes you want to dream up all sorts of elaborate recipes and stay in cooking gorgeous dinners for your nearest and dearest. Except that late autumn can be a really busy time of year and it turns out that I have more breakfasts and lunches to be cooking up than elaborate dinners. Just as well that I love mushrooms on toast, mushroom omelette and mushroom soup. And that I know that sometimes keeping it simple is okay.





But all that frustrated culinary inspiration does make me look forward all the more to this coming Friday's **Guerrilla Gourmet Club**, described as a "one night only popup autumn harvest dinner", when I'll have some of the season's best ingredients cooked in suitably elaborate style. The dinner takes place in the The Royal College of Surgeons at 7pm, Friday 15 November, when they will serve a menu created by Ross Golden-Bannon (my ex-editor, formerly of **FOOD&WINE Magazine**) and Temple Garner of San Lorenzo in Dublin's Georges Street (formerly head chef at The Mermaid Café and head chef/founder of Town Bar and Grill). I love Temple's cooking. It is full of big generous flavours and executed with subtle skill. Perfect for the generously flavoured ingredients of this time of year.

Ross and Temple's terroir-based menu focusses on celebrating the best of local. 'Terroir' is a wine term used to capture the relationship between geography (in other words, place, soil, climate, weather, aspect) and people (farmers, growers, producers and even consumers) and the end product (wine, or in this case, food). In the Guerrilla Gourmet Club's own words: "Terroir is not just about great taste it's also about flourishing local economies. Together a band of small local business are a strong buffer to economic difficulties. The Guerrilla Gourmet Club aims to amplify this message through terroir dinners created by high profile chefs, in unusual settings."

The dinner costs €75 and for that you'll enjoy a drinks reception with local, seasonal canapés followed a four-course meal with wine. There's also a tasting of **8 Degrees Brewing** beers at the start of the meal and **Highbank Organic Dessert Cider** at the end – both of which happen to be amongst my favourite craft brewers in Ireland at the minute. The evening promises to be a sociable affair, and if you're going with a gang they can seat you together (make sure you give them advance notice).

I've had a sneak peak at the menu and it includes gorgeous seasonal treats like pheasant consommé with Madeira, truffle and foie gras tortellini – just the kind of elaborate dish I would love to be cooking up with my stash of autumnal mushrooms, if I had the time this week. Instead, I'll just have to slum it with shiitake soup, and look forward to Friday's feast!

For further information, email [guerrillagourmetclub@gmail.com](mailto:guerrillagourmetclub@gmail.com), or see [www.facebook.com/theguerrillagourmetclub](http://www.facebook.com/theguerrillagourmetclub). To book, go to <https://guerrillagourmetclubrcsi.eventbrite.ie>



My favourite from 8 Degrees Brewing: their Howling Gale Ale



Filed in Artisan food producers, Craft beers, Listings of Events | 0 Comments

« Next Page |